

My career path

- what I learned along the way **-

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** Your milage may/will vary!!



Academic path

- Always wanted to know more than anybody else and figured research would be the ideal spot for me
 - I also had a (mistaken?!) impression that the academic path was completely devoid of human subjectivity
- Completed my PhD in 2014 at SBU
- Postdoctoral positions
 - University of Virginia: 2014-2019
 - Stony Brook University: 2019-2021
 - Mississippi State University: 2021-2023
- Staff Scientist @ Jefferson Lab
 - 2023 -> ?



Why did I do that?

- Decided that doing something different from my PhD work was going to make me a better physicist
 - Also I had an inkling that the EIC was coming and wanted to get electron scattering experience
 - Good things:
 - Overcoming challenges in a new environment is very satisfying
 - It does broaden your horizons and gives you a chance to choose what you want to do
 - You have the chance to prove yourself to a different set of people (who don't know you since you knew nothing)
 - Bad things:
 - Lots of new challenges that might take a while to sort out
 - Productivity does down
 - It will be harder for a whole new set of people to want to give you lots of responsibilities from the beginning
- I also wanted to improve my two-body problem by going to a place that had a higher preponderance of jobs

Path to a “permanent” position / Lessons learned

- Always wanted to get to a university position
- Started applications in 2017 (3 years after PhD)
 - Didn't feel like I had anything to talk about in a job talk => wrong approach
- Made applications to both universities (mostly) and labs (when I was aware that a position was open)
- I was shocked to find out departmental politics are a thing!
- I found it really hard to get clear (any?!) feedback as to why a particular interview didn't end up in an offer
 - Remember that during an interview you are also interviewing the department
- Learned that after a certain point rejection has little to do with your research, your ability to teach, or your personality
- If you ask for help (most) people are very happy to give you advice (or applications packages) and suggest more things to do
 - It is still not clear to me that if I did them all things would have been better

Path to a “permanent” position / Lessons learned

- Disclosing that you have a two-body problem during the interview process is probably a bad idea
 - While they are not allowed to discriminate against you for it, volunteering this information to a committee will give them something additional to consider besides your research, teaching
- Having a large group of people knowing you are looking for jobs (networking!) makes things easier
 - Sometimes having a letter from a person that you don't know well but has some sway with (at least one person in) the committee might get you to the interview stage (but not much further beyond that)
- Landing a job involves a quite a bit of luck
- Improving your job situation involves a lot of work and potentially applying to a better job somewhere else

Working at a national lab

- You do have (some) time to do your own independent research
 - Although most of the time it should be related to the goals of the lab
- Developing new research avenues is quite appreciated and encouraged
- A major part of the job is supporting the mission of the lab
 - operations and maintenance
 - developing new capabilities
 - interacting with users (students are often stationed at the lab and basically in your care)
- Can be an ideal place if you enjoy fast-paced work and your interests align with the lab
 - But can be a disaster if they don't (or your boss's interests)
- No need to submit funding proposals